

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages of the latest news, including our **Corporate Update**, plus full pages from:

- **Celebrity Cruises**
- **Helloworld Travel**

CTM drops Healy

CTM has announced the immediate termination of Chief Executive Officer for UK and Europe Michael Healy for breach of his contractual obligations.

Healy was temporarily stood down last month amid the company's ongoing auditing scandal (**TD** 28 Nov).

The update was revealed in an ASX announcement this morning, where CTM also said it has entered a financial security arrangement with the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

The arrangement ensures the continued operation of all air ticketing activities with no disruption to client services, while the company's financial statements are being finalised.

"All customer-facing teams and systems remain fully functional, and the company continues to meet all service obligations without interruption," the ASX announcement stated.

CTM said it will provide a further update in Feb 2026.

In 2021, Healy was awarded an Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the Queen's New Year 2021 Honours list.

The award was in recognition of the leadership he showed during CTM's work to repatriate 38,000 travellers from 58 countries and territories on 188 charter flights over a period of 12 weeks.

LE connects Oz to Maldives

LUXURY Escapes (LE) and Maldivian have teamed up to launch Australia's first-ever direct flights to the Maldives (**TD** breaking news).

The new non-stop service will fly from Melbourne to Male on a seasonal basis, operated by Luxury Escapes and provided by the Maldives' national carrier.

Dubbed the 'Maldivian Luxury Escapes Express', the service - available exclusively to Luxury Escapes customers - will operate a weekly evening departure on Mon, with the inaugural flight set to take off 18 May 2026.

Maldivian will deploy a widebody A330-200 aircraft on the route, which will initially operate for around six months following approvals from Australian regulators.

The service could be extended for a second season or made permanent, if demand is there.

LE co-founder and CEO Adam Schwab said the charter with Maldivian comes off the back of thousands of customer requests for direct flights.

"According to our booking data, hotel reservations are up 17% with an average length of stay between five to six nights, so we tailored our flight schedule to allow almost seven days on the ground," he explained.

Go big with Celeb

CELEBRITY Cruises has launched its biggest sale of the year, which offers up to 75% off your client's second guest, combined with bonus savings on select dates.

Get more details on **page six**.



Melbourne Airport CEO Lorie Argus (**pictured** with Schab) declared the new service a huge win for both Aussie travellers and Melbourne Airport.

"We know non-stop flights are incredibly appealing to travellers because of time savings and convenience they offer, and we expect these Luxury Escapes charters will prove very popular with Australians looking for a relaxing getaway."

Launch package offers start from \$2,599 per person for the return flight and five nights in a selection of luxury resorts with inclusions, and are now available to book via LE. *JM*

HLO doubles in Bris

HELLOWORLD Travel has expanded its presence in Brisbane with a new store opening at Mt Gravatt Plaza.

The opening sees long-standing member of the HLO network, Colin Jakins, become a multi-store operator, building on the success of his Sunnybank Hills store.

Located in a prime position within a vibrant retail hub, Helloworld Travel Mt Gravatt Plaza offers great visibility, strong branding, and convenient access for customers.

MEANWHILE, Helloworld has released a special end-of-year message to the trade - see the **back page**.

Travel Daily
ON LOCATION



BURNIE

Today's issue of **TD** is coming to you courtesy of Norwegian, which is this week hosting us aboard *Norwegian Spirit*.

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line's *Norwegian Spirit* is back in Tasmania, making her first call to the island state this season.

Spirit has docked in the port city of Burnie today, located in North West Tasmania around Emu Bay.

Burnie is referred to as a "maker's enclave", known for its local craftsmanship, as well as its nature; today, passengers will explore the region's waterfalls, gardens, and coastal villages on a range of excursions.

US to lose incentives

THE US' proposal to view travellers' social media history upon entry will hamper the corporate travel market, said Peter Gray, the founder of incentive program design company, Motivating People.

Gray predicted it would act as a "direct disincentive" for companies, which normally recommend US destinations as group travel rewards.

In fact, the new costs for their clients would likely increase greatly, he explained, given the added levels of complexity required to submit five years of social media history for up to hundreds of participants of a group travel reward, plus the added liability and confidentiality.

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Oddtrips looks to double quickly

EXCLUSIVE



NEW Melbourne-based travel operator Oddtrips has revealed to *Travel Daily* plans to double its catalogue of experiences and destinations within the next three months (*TD* 09 Dec).

GM Paul Hocking said the company is aiming to expand offerings in eastern Europe, including the Baltics, Balkans, and the Stans of Central Asia, due to the popularity of these destinations within Oddtrips' first month of operations.

The business has also seen demand for the Indonesian island of Lombok, which Hocking said appeals to "people who've been to Bali [and want] to do a similar experience, but in a bit more of an authentic way".

Hocking said Oddtrips plans to work closely with agents and educate them in selling its tours, while also marketing directly to

the consumer.

"We've got regular ads that go out direct to consumers and we make it super easy for them to book online," he said.

"But at the same time, we place huge value on what travel agents do for our industry and we want to work with [them] as well.

"We've already had a few agents reach out who want to work with us, and I think the more agents that we can partner with the better to make selling these sorts of less-visited destinations a bit easier for them."

Hocking explained to *TD* that

social media has played a huge role in identifying in-demand destinations for its itineraries.

"Seeing what's trending on [social media], you get a good idea of what's at the forefront of where people might be wanting to go next," he said.

Central Asia has seen a huge uplift in tourism this year, Hocking pointed out, especially among Instagram and TikTok users, who tend to highlight the region's untouched rugged landscapes and adventure experiences.

As well as providing journeys to obscure destinations, the tour operator also aims to give back to the communities it visits.

"Say there's a destination we want to offer...[we conduct] a lot of research into the operators, having detailed calls with them to see what they want, how they can help, and curating trips that really showcase their destination in a more meaningful way." *JB*

A Heartful call-out

FOLLOWING its decision to cease operations after a cyber attack that hit its main source of revenue, purpose-driven travel start-up Heartful has put out a call for interested buyers (*TD* 18 Dec).

"In an ideal world, we'd love to see Heartful continue on as a genuinely valued and impact-driven alternative to the likes of Airbnb and Booking, and a 100% Australian-owned, female-founded one at that," CEO and founder Jen Clark told *TD*.

She also said the platform could be re-appropriated for use by another accommodation or booking marketplace looking for a head start when it comes to technical infrastructure.

The buyer will gain a range of features that were set to rollout in 2026, including SRPs (Search Result Pages), a supplier marketplace, an embeddable booking widget for independent accommodation websites and more - contact info is [HERE](#).



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Crowne Plaza shines

THE Sunshine Coast will be the location of IHG's next Crowne Plaza in Australia, slated to open in 2028.

Located in Maroochydore's town centre, the \$150 million project will include 180 rooms, as well as a pool, spa, sauna and gym, and 160-seat dining room.

The hotel will also offer value for event planners, with 900m² of events space as part of the floor plan, as well as a large ballroom.

"The Sunshine Coast requires more than 2,400 additional hotel rooms, or around 10 new hotels, to support our tourism industry into the future," Sunshine Coast Mayor Rosanna Natoli said.

"Council took a bold step to create incentives and it is having an impact, Crowne Plaza ticks every box in terms of providing important tourism infrastructure to boost our region's appeal as a year-round destination."

Construction will commence in Apr next year.

ATMC enlists Goldman

GOLDMAN Group joint MD David Goldman has been announced as Chairperson of the Association of Travel Management Companies (ATMC) for 2026, taking over from Penny Spencer, who led the organisation over the past year.

"As corporate travel evolves at pace, the need for strong advocacy, aligned partnerships and a unified industry voice has never been greater," Goldman (pictured) commented.

"ATMC exists to ensure our members are informed, supported and represented with clarity and purpose.

"Together, we will help shape a future that is strategic, innovative and resilient," he added.

Representing a large share of the local corporate industry, the association connects travel management companies with airlines, hotels, tech partners and other stakeholders.



According to ATMC, the corporate sector is currently undergoing a "pivotal" moment in time, as it faces changing distribution models, new technology adoption, and evolving corporate expectations.

ATMC recently announced its partnership with the Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA), which will see it continue to operate independently, while gaining access to ATIA's national platform, advocacy, expertise and workforce initiatives. JHM



Window Seat

AS PER tradition, Reho Travel is back with its annual Christmas 'card' to celebrate the festive season.

This year, CEO Karsten Horne has written and produced a three-minute K-pop-inspired video, featuring an AI version of himself alongside another AI robot called Chad, in a battle over who provides the best travel experience.

"You might predict, but you don't feel, no rhythm warmth or Reho zeal," 'sings' Horne.

"I'll take the spark, the heart, the flair - that's why our clients know we care."

The video is certainly an evolution since the hand drawn cards that the Reho team sent out from Malawi more than 20 years ago.

Watch the video [HERE](#).

ALBATROSS
Tours

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CORPORATE UPDATE

Teams crave nature resets

CORPORATE retreats focusing on collaboration and wellbeing are on the rise in Australia, new research has revealed.

A recent survey conducted by Southern Highlands luxury retreat Kalinya Estate found that companies are increasingly seeking destinations that offer privacy, nature, high-quality food and space to reconnect when planning team retreats.

Sixty-four percent of respondents said they were either open to or actively considering a corporate retreat, with 85% listing team bonding as their top goal, and more than half seeking wellness and creativity.

A relaxed, nature-based setting dominated the wishlist for retreats, with 52% of teams favouring this over all other styles - far exceeding the second most-popular choice of a corporate/professional setting (21%).

The top priorities for teams planning a retreat included high-quality catering (59%), onsite accommodation (58%), and versatile indoor/outdoor meeting spaces (55%), with nature and wellness experiences (40%) also high on the list.

In terms of preferred activities, team-building challenges (29%), wine tasting/drinks experiences (19%) and outdoor games (14%) attracted the most votes.

Additionally, half of all respondents said they would be willing travel between one and two hours for a retreat. *JM*

New pay solution

INDEPENDENT B2B travel technology marketplace HBX Group has partnered with Mastercard to launch a new virtual payment program.

Designed to bring greater efficiency, flexibility and security to travel payments worldwide, the initiative leverages the Mastercard Wholesale Programme, allowing HBX Group's partners to process supplier payouts instantly.

The program also tracks and reconciles transactions automatically, and offers enhanced cash-flow visibility and fraud protection.

The virtual payment solution is now available in Europe, the UK and the US, and will roll out in APAC in the first half of 2026.

AA Admirals refresh

AMERICAN Airlines has announced it will renovate its Admirals Club lounge in Concourse D of Virginia's Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport in early 2026.

Upon completion, the lounge will span more than 3,048m², adding around 50% more seating, as well as a refreshed design and upgraded amenities.

The current lounge space will close during construction, with customers still able to access the Admirals Club lounges in Concourses C and E.



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TK opens first lounge in UK



TURKISH Airlines has unveiled its new lounge at Edinburgh Airport in partnership with Plaza Premium Group (PPG), representing the airline's inaugural lounge in the UK.

The newly opened venue will welcome Turkish Airlines Business Class passengers, Miles&Smiles members, Star Alliance carriers, and Plaza Premium's long-standing partners.

With the capacity for 149 guests, the 673m² space is designed to offer privacy and comfort, with divided into four distinct zones - a premium seating area, a VIP zone, a prayer room, and a nursing facility.

Turkish Airlines Chief Operations Officer, Akif Konar, described the opening as "an important milestone" for the airline.

"As our first abroad lounge in Europe and our eighth outside of Türkiye, this investment

demonstrates our deep commitment to our European operations where we already possess a strong presence as the best airline of the continent.

"Looking ahead, we will continue to build on our presence in the region and bringing our award-winning hospitality closer to travellers here."

Okan Kufeci, Senior Vice President EMEA at Plaza Premium Group, commented: "This lounge represents our vision of blending authentic Turkish hospitality with the highest international standards."

"We are proud to create a space that not only meets the expectations of our Business Class and Star Alliance passengers but also offers a memorable, serene experience for all travellers.

"Edinburgh is now home to a lounge that truly embodies the spirit of Turkish Airlines." *JM*



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2025
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BestPrice Travel is offering a 20% discount for groups of four or more, or 15% for couples or groups of three, on the 'Vietnam Gourmet Odyssey: Michelin Delights from North to South' tour. The 10-day culinary and cultural journey takes guests through Hanoi, Ha Long, Da Nang, Hoi An, and Ho Chi Minh City, including Michelin-recognised food experiences and an overnight luxury cruise on Halong Bay. Find out more [HERE](#).

Trisara has unveiled two new stay offers designed for travellers seeking refined dining, wellness and coastal escapes in Phuket. Available to book now through 31 Oct 2026, the experiences include 'Signature of Trisara', a wellness-led stay combining a private pool villa or suite, full-board dining, Jara Signature spa treatments, and a private excursion to Koh Waeo; and 'Taste of Trisara', a gourmet-focused escape - click [HERE](#).

Railbookers is offering travellers an extra \$100 off its 2026 rail adventures. The limited-time offer applies to journeys across Europe, North America, and beyond. Use code Holiday100AU - [CLICK HERE](#).

Hurtigruten has launched a Boxing Day flash sale, with discounts of up to 50% off now live. The offer is available until 31 Dec on select 2026/27 departures, including the 12-day 'The Coastal Express' voyage. Together with the current flash sale, Hurtigruten is also offering \$500 off and a bonus \$500 credit on its best-selling tour package, 'Follow the Northern Lights'. Terms and conditions can be found [HERE](#).

W Kuala Lumpur is offering Australians up to 20% off stays on bookings of three nights or more, plus daily breakfast. The sale celebrates the new Malaysia Airlines routes from Australia to Kuala Lumpur and beyond. Use promotional code HL1 and [CLICK HERE](#) to learn more.

Ignite Travel has released holiday packages to New Caledonia, which offer up to \$1,350 bonus value and come with exclusive inclusions, such as return flights, resort credits, dining experiences, guided city tours, and more. The deal ends 29 Dec - take advantage [HERE](#).

AAT Kings has launched a slate of early Boxing Day deals across its most in-demand Australian and New Zealand tours for 2026. Travellers can save more than \$2,000 per person on the 13-day 'Small Group Perfect Tasmania' itinerary, which departs 09 Jan 2026 - see [HERE](#).

Cruise Traveller has introduced 'Japan in Bloom', a 12-night luxury voyage sailing during Japan's Golden Week in Apr-May 2026. The new package with Japan-based line Mitsui Ocean Cruises includes a 'fly free, stay free' offer for bookings made by 28 Jan. Find out more [HERE](#).

Voco Kirkton Park Hunter Valley is serving up a limited-edition yum cha menu at its signature dining venue, Locavore Restaurant, throughout Jan. The \$88pp menu features Cantonese favourites available every Wed-Sun from 12-3pm. Overnight guests can enjoy an exclusive discount, paying only \$66 per person. Learn more [HERE](#).

Bunnik's big bash winners



BUNNIK Tours has revealed the lucky winners of its 'Big Birthday Giveaway', which launched 01 Apr, to thank travel agents for their ongoing support after 30 years of business (**TD** 21 Mar).

The incentive invited advisors across the country to take part in the incentive, which offered more than \$70,000 worth of goodies, including four major prizes.

Cathay Donaghy from Helloworld Travel Strathpine in Queensland (pictured with Bunnik BDM KJ Phillips) won a trip for two on the 20-day 'Peru Explorer' itinerary, while Robyn Stankovic of Travel with Robyn scored a 12-day trip to Egypt.

RAA Travel Marion's Sarah Haniotis will jet-set to Sri Lanka on a 17-day adventure, and Rachael Gribbon from Gallivanter Travel Townsville will experience the 10-day 'Treasures of Portugal' tour.

Bunnik said the response to the giveaway "far exceeded expectations", with hundreds of agents participating.

"Reaching 30 years in business is a huge milestone for us, and it wouldn't have been possible

without the continued support of agents across Australia," said joint-CEO, Dennis Bunnik.

The operator also announced its next famil, which will explore South Korea - entries close 16 Jan, find out more [HERE](#). *JM*

G'day makes a buy

G'DAY Group has acquired a holiday park in Lake Tinaroo, making it the group's 18th Discovery Park in Queensland.

The property lies 90 minutes southwest of Cairns, and its proximity to the lake and dam at Tinaroo provides options for boating, fishing and kayaking.

The park includes a splashpad, two swimming pools, a jumping pillow, basketball court, and games room.

"While Lake Tinaroo is already a strong-performing destination, we see scope to lift visitation year-round through targeted marketing, guest experience improvements and sensitive, staged development where appropriate," G'Day Group's CEO Grant Wilckens said.

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helloworld
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Season's Greetings

As the year draws to a close, we celebrate our incredible agent networks and preferred partners that make our success possible. Thank you for your unwavering support and dedication in 2025.

May your festive season be filled with joy, relaxation, and unforgettable moments. Together, let's make 2026 our most exceptional year yet.

**Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year
from VIVA Holidays, ReadyRooms, CruiseCo and Creative Cruising**

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